



TMHA
Transitions Mental
Health Association

Reaching Out

HELPING CHILDREN AND ADULTS LIVE, WORK AND GROW IN OUR COMMUNITY

Spring 2011 - Volume 6, Issue 1

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Gardening Tips from Growing Grounds

Gardeners, arise! With the last frost of winter behind us, it's time to hit the dirt. Vegetables, flowers, citrus and even poinsettias hanging around from Christmas are ready to bring your garden back to life.

It may be too late to plant fresh tomatoes or chard by seed, but you can pick up dozens of organic veggie starts at the Growing Grounds Farm Santa Maria and Downtown Store in SLO. If you grow tomatoes, consider growing several varieties together: grape tomatoes for snacking, Romas for salsa and sauces, and a beefsteak variety for sandwiches. Be sure your plants have a cage or fence to climb up and don't be afraid to thin out to prevent crowding as good air circulation among plants can prevent disease.

The Central Coast is a wonderful place to grow your own veggies and flowers, but each micro-climate requires a customized approach. For instance, if you can see the ocean from your house it is likely that your garden will need screening from the sea air. Fences, shrubs, and buildings can all effectively shield your garden from the afternoon wind without blocking out the sun.

Another coastal reality to keep in mind is our notorious summer fog. Most vegetable plants require six hours of sunshine. Since our fog tends to burn off by the afternoon, you can insure maximum afternoon sunshine by positioning gardens on the south side of buildings and trees.



The **Growing Grounds Farm in San Luis Obispo** is open to the public the third Tuesday of each month from 2:00-4:00 p.m. www.growinggroundsfarm.org

Growing Grounds Downtown Keep up on the blog: <http://growinggroundsdowntown.blogspot.com>

Growing Grounds Farm in Santa Maria has a blog, too! <http://growinggroundsfarmsm.blogspot.com>

North SLO County has its own challenges as blazingly hot temperatures dominate the summer. As a general rule, plants with small or narrow leaves fare better in hot climates. Silver foliage also tolerates heat better than pale green or cream foliage. Succulents store a lot of water in their leaves and stems, allowing them to withstand dry conditions better

than "soft" plants like mint or basil. California natives, a specialty of Growing Grounds Farm San Luis Obispo, do quite well and can be planted at any time.

In spite of all the rain we received this winter, we must still be conscientious in our use of water. Herbs, lettuce and most flowers require a good deal more irrigation than established landscape and native plants. Over-saturating



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SLOtheStigma Campaign Revealed

The SLOtheStigma Campaign has a new look with a new billboard along Highway 101! This phase of the campaign makes explicit that the stigma refers to mental illness.

Alec Ramsey, Creative Director and Co-owner of 20/20 Creative Group, was instrumental in designing this unique, time-released approach.

“The SLO the Stigma campaign has a life of it’s own, and we wanted that life to mirror the transition that people who live with mental illness often go through. The beginning of the campaign was dark and hidden, representing the isolation and shame some people feel when dealing with mental illness. This causes questioning and confusion for those around them, so the first phase of our campaign was meant to simulate those same feelings for the viewer. Once people reach out and seek help, they can find hope and the answers they are looking for. That’s what this new phase of SLO the Stigma represents.”

SLOtheStigma.org is a mental health awareness and stigma reduction campaign, the first of its kind in San Luis Obispo County. The project has a robust online presence, a comprehensive list of resources for anyone in need, and a documentary on mental illness. The campaign is designed to increase awareness of mental health issues, decrease the stigma of mental illness, and guide individuals who have a mental illness and their families to mental health resources.

Board Member Spotlight

One of the more impressive qualities of the TMHA Board is the longevity of so many of the dedicated Directors.

In fact, there is an average tenure of seven years among the fifteen current members. So it is a rare and intriguing opportunity to get the perspective of a newcomer to the group. Meet **Cindy Johnson**.

Cindy has been on TMHA’s Board for just over a year. She moved to San Luis Obispo from the East Bay in 2003, and within a matter of months met Linda McGregor of Hotline. Cindy has always made nonprofit work a part of her life, and was soon helping organize the Hotline Bowl-a-Thon fundraiser. She joined the agency’s Board, and was instrumental in bringing the 211 program to San Luis Obispo.

Cindy was serving as Vice President of the Hotline Board when the agency’s financial situation became precarious and the service had to be split in two to insure that both pieces could survive. As United Way and TMHA were brought into negotiations, Cindy met Jill Bolster-White and was invited to join the TMHA Board as part of the Hotline merger.

As Cindy describes it, the experience with TMHA has exceeded her expectations of how a Board can operate. She has an extensive background in both the corporate world (she worked with Costco for many years), and the realm of small nonprofits

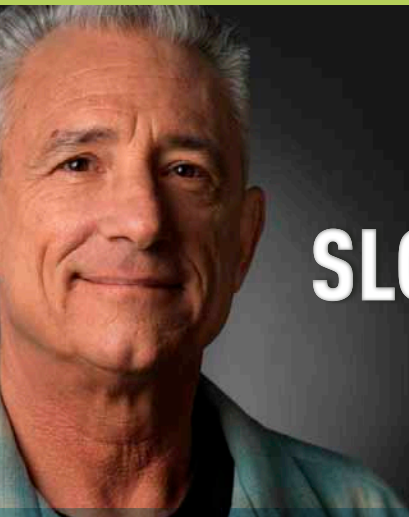


Photo by Aaron Lambert

struggling to stay afloat. Cindy finds it refreshing and exciting to see what an organization like TMHA can accomplish when you constantly look forward.

“I thought all nonprofit boards were small, hardscrabble groups that put their energy into begging for funds,” Cindy admitted. While TMHA must regularly grapple with the roller coaster of state and county funding, the Board of Directors focuses on far more than fiscal survival. At a recent Strategic Planning session, the Board and staff came together and “it was amazing how well we mixed. There was so little division between the two groups. What emerged was a shared vision, which thanks to Jill, remained visionary and positive throughout.” Cindy describes the Board as remarkably balanced, and she is particularly struck by the cohesion. “People can voice very different opinions, and everyone is respectful and listens to each other.” She feels this is because they all share a love of the organization.

What does she find new and exciting at TMHA? The fact that more funds and energy are being devoted to housing. Cindy champions the idea of TMHA buying and owning transitional housing, and feels it is strategically savvy to recognize how the expenditure of housing a homeless individual can cost the community far less than if that individual ends up in jail or the emergency room.



Understand Mental Health

SLOTHESTIGMA.org

OR CALL 800.549.4499

COMMUNITY

Path to a Home

On January 26th, 2011 3,774 people were without a home in SLO County; 49% were children; 31% report experiencing mental illness. That's the bad news. The good news is we have a plan, and it is working. Path to a Home is San Luis Obispo's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. A primary goal is to house people who have been homeless and to help them find their way back to the security of home.

TMHA's part in the vision for San Luis Obispo's Plan is that people who have been homeless and have mental illness have access to treatment, employment, education and housing. Our 18-year old Transitional Housing for Homeless Program (THH) has been putting chronically homeless adults on a fast-track to housing and has successfully done this for over 75%



Dolly Ward graduated from THH in April of 2009. She had been living in a small travel trailer and working at Kmart when she was diagnosed with Emphysema. A friend recommended the program to her and after 9 months she was ready to move on into Section 8 housing. "This is a wonderful program. I saw it as a once in a lifetime opportunity."

Cindy talked about one of the ways TMHA is particularly unique. The agency holds two-day orientation sessions for new employees, where they get to meet staff members, many of whom have lived experience with mental illness. She considers it a remarkable commitment TMHA makes to all its employees, to properly immerse them in the culture of their new job. In all her previous corporate and nonprofit experience, Cindy never saw anything quite like it, and



of residents. THH currently has 41 beds and on average serves 45-50 people a year.

County-wide, progress has been made. Between 2009 and 2011, 500 fewer homeless adults were in San Luis Obispo County! Plus, last year 180 people received assistance that prevented homelessness. How did this all happen? The Homeless Services Oversight Council is a broad alliance of community leaders from government, non-profit and business, dedicated

to making Path to a Home a reality. Under the focused leadership of Supervisor Adam Hill the Council aims to inspire a community wide commitment to end homelessness one person (and often, one family) at a time. Our collective commitment can't help but spark the energy to get the job done, once and for all. We will describe the Santa Barbara County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in our next issue of *Reaching Out*.

she believes this uncommon approach pays dividends.

Cindy participated in the orientation herself, and said it was incredible to hear people talk about mental illness and absorb how common it can be.

One year into her service, and already an exemplary champion of TMHA and its entire program. Welcome, Cindy. We look forward to having you here for years to come!



"Inner City" by Art of Recovery featured artist Patrick Bergin

Art of Recovery

The 6th annual *Art of Recovery* exhibit is coming to Santa Maria this May, in support of Mental Health Awareness Month. Every year this one-of-a-kind traveling art exhibit showcases the work of people in mental health recovery, offering the public a unique opportunity to learn about the artists, educate themselves about mental illness, and purchase a variety of inspiring creations.

The tour will begin at the Town Center East in Santa Maria on Friday, May 13th with an opening reception and runs through May 20th, then moves to the Southside Café in downtown Lompoc from May 23rd through the 30th. The show is presented by TMHA and the Healing Arts Council of Santa Barbara County (HACSB), and is open and free to the public.

Art of Recovery was started in 1995, offering people in mental health recovery a way to express themselves and help the community to understand that people should not be defined by their illness, but by their strengths, gifts and the contributions they make to society.

"You will be inspired by what you see at the shows, and we

invite you to support the individual artists by purchasing a treasure or two," said Frank Ricceri, Associate Director of TMHA's Northern Santa Barbara County programs.

For more information, please contact Crystal Gonsalves at (805) 928-0139 or cgonsalves@t-mha.org.



Gardening Tips (continued from page 1)

your garden can cause the roots of your plants to rot; under-watering will lead to shriveled flowers and bitter produce. The best way to know how your garden is doing is to spend time in it. Pay attention to the moisture level in the soil to know if your watering fits the weather. It's also wise to keep an eye out for snails and caterpillars that will happily get your veggies before you can.

Gardening can be an active, therapeutic activity for everyone. The Growing Grounds staff is available and happy to offer practical advice, along with their outstanding, chemical-free seeds, herbs and veggie starts.



TRANSITIONS
Mental Health Association
P.O. Box 15408
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Return Service Requested

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

Volunteer

Volunteers are always welcome in our programs and funding events. One or two hours of your time each week can make an enormous difference. Contact volunteer@t-mha.org for more information.

Donate

Donations of money, service, vehicles or other needed items are both appreciated and vital to continuing the quality programs we provide. Funds are used to purchase equipment for the farms, essential household items for our supportive housing, clothes for adults and teens and more.

- Please include TMHA in your year-end tax planning
- Stay updated by visiting our web site at www.t-mha.org

If you would like to donate your financial support or time, please contact us at:

Transitions - Mental Health Association
Post Office Box 15408
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
(805) 540-6500
www.t-mha.org

Thank You!

OUR DEEPEST APPRECIATION

Our heartfelt thanks to the **Kiwanis Club of San Luis Obispo de Tolosa** who once again invited T-MHA to benefit from their annual fall auction. It was a fun evening of live and silent auctions, great food, plenty of merriment and generous fundraising.



The fantastic brewers who donated libations and the talented chefs from Mee Heng Low; Windows on the Water; The Lido at Dolphin Bay Resort; and Cass House gave their time and talent to create a six-course meal for 120 people and made this year's **Brewers' Dinner** a success, raising over \$11,000!

Journey of Hope 2011: A Community Forum on Living Mentally Well – Over 700 people attended our January event featuring speaker Kevin Hines. Our thanks to New Life Church, Central Coast Psychological Association, resource table participants and all those who attended. We are grateful for panelists: Kevin Hines; Patrick Hines; Janice Holmes; Steve Kadin, PhD, ABPP; Rebecca McGarigle, LCSW; and Amanda Nelson. And a big thanks to our emcee Frank Warren of SLO County Behavioral Health.



SLO Hotline's annual Bowl-a-Thon: A 30 year tradition! This spring, hundreds of bowlers filled the lanes at Paso Robles, Pismo Beach and Santa Maria Bowls for friendly competition and fun fundraising. The event raised over \$54,000! Our sincere thanks to the volunteers and bowlers who worked so hard to make this event possible and to the event sponsors: New Times, WalMart-Paso Robles, J.Carroll, PG&E and 20/20 Design.

LOOKING AHEAD

The fourth annual **SLO Wine and Grill Affair** will be held in June at Per Bacco Cellars in SLO. Exemplary local wineries are gathering at the historic Filipponi Ranch for food, wine and fun. Tickets will be available at www.t-mha.org under the events section or by calling (805) 540-6526.



The 2011 **Ten Terrific Trunks of Treasure** event is coming soon! A truly delightful event full of suspense, great prizes and fantastic hors d'oeuvres. Ten Trunks of Treasures is one our longest running fundraisers and is held each fall in San Luis Obispo.

Our **Peer Advisory and Advocacy Team (PAAT)** is teaming up with NAMI of SLO County to put on a Walk for Wellness on Saturday, May 21st from 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m. at Mitchell Park in downtown SLO. This event is in support of Mental Health Awareness Month and will feature resource information, music and food. Please join us for this free community event. Contact Darryl Elliott or Jessica Vieira for more info at 805-540-6500.

